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Passed March 1828

An

Inaugural Essay

on

Phlegmasia Dolens

by

Jesse H Bonsall

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On Phlegmasia Dolens.

The disease which constitutes the subject of the following essay, has generally been called Phlegmasia Dolens, though numerous other appellations have been given to it by various writers.

As Ecchymoma Lymphatica. Adema Lactium Anasarca Serosa. Cruritis. &c

But I shall without further prelude, pass to the consideration of the disease itself, and not enter into any investigation of the propriety of these different synonymes.

It is a disease comparatively of rare occurrence and has for considerable length of time engaged the attention of Medical men. and although there is every reason for supposing, that the disease has existed from the earliest period of society, and must have been coeval with those incident to the

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puerperal state, little attention appears to have been paid to it by the Ancients.

Mr. White of Manchester in his inquiry says That out of 1897 women delivered at the Westminster general Dispensary, five only were seized with it: and of 8000 women delivered at the Manchester lying-in Hospital, and there own Houses, no more than four were affected by this complaint.

General History

Phlegmasia Dolens principally affects women in the puerperal state, though to this general rule there are a few exceptions; cases of the desease having appeared in the Male and in the female independantly of the parturient state. It is very irregular in its occurrence making its appearance in some cases in the course of twenty four or forty eight hours after delivery and at other times not until a month or even six weeks have elapsed, but in general the attack takes

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place from the tenth to the fifteenth day after parturition.

It never attacks both limbs at once though frequently transmits itself from one to the other occurring in all situations, in the country as well as the city, all ranks and all habits, the rich, the poor the robust and the delicate, those who give suck and those who do not, all being liable to an attack of it.

In the commencement of the disease the patient generally complains, of a pain in the groin of one side a considerable degree of Pyrexia accompanying not unfrequently ushered in by a slight chill. The part affected soon becomes swelled, very tense with more or less pain extending from the groin down in the inner side of the thigh to the leg. The appearance of the limb externally is White and preternaturally glossy. The swelling does

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not extend beyond the Labium Pudendi of the affected side but gradually progressing downward involves the whole limb from the groin to the foot frequently attaining double the size of the sound extremity. It is not attended with external signs of inflammation. There being no redness but is hard, smooth, glabrous, pale and equable except where the conglobate glands are situated, which are corded and knotty as in the groin, the ham, ... the back and ... fleshy parts of the leg."* when pressed upon it is elastic, no impression remaining after the pressure is removed. If punctured a small quantity of fluid exudes which soon coagulates.

Though I have described the disease as commencing at the groin this is not universally the case, for there are instances in which it has been known to commence in the foot, the Middle of the leg and the knee but, this in a practical

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count of very little consequence, for in a short time the disease extends through and the extremity and presents no appearance of an erysipelas.

The termination of this disease is in resolution commencing with diminution of pain in the iliac and inguinal regions together with a subsidence of the swelling and return of the lochia and incient discharges if they have been suppressed. The convalescence terminates in exfoliation and when it does it is probably the result of improper treatment.

Causes

The older writers who have noticed this complaint considered it as a [illegible] but modern [illegible] from a suppression or retrocession of the catamenia to the [illegible] during the [illegible] and the position is by no means unsupported, for it can not account for its appearance in pregnant females, or in those who have [illegible]

[illegible] of the lower [illegible]
[illegible] has to have [illegible] and [illegible]
attention for the [illegible]

Mr. [illegible] in his treatise on "Hemorrhoids
[illegible]" this disorder is owing to the child's head
[illegible] in [illegible] passes which [illegible]
[illegible] against the [illegible] of the
[illegible] [illegible] hours so as to stop the
[illegible] of the lymph that is [illegible]
and peristaltic [illegible] in [illegible] regularly
and if the heart continues any time in that
situation which the lymph is driven in [illegible]
[illegible] to the peristaltic contraction of the
[illegible] vessel and the strong pulsation of the
inguinal artery. Though the coats should be allowed
to be stronger than those of the blood vessels,
must at last burst and shed its contents. [illegible]
the [illegible] made on the lymphatic is [illegible]
the diameter of the tube is contracted, or totally shut

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] appeared in each instance simultaneously [illegible] [illegible] were remarked, pain in one and then in the other.

3d If we admit the rupture to take place during [illegible] [illegible] what I may call [illegible] of the inclosed fluid in swelling, appearing for the space of ten or fifteen days. If this was the case the death [illegible] immediately.

4th That swelling does not [illegible] [illegible] appearance in the given [illegible] it should be if a rupture of the lamina had taken place.

5th That it has appeared in the female under circumstances of a state connected with [illegible] [illegible].

Q. Hence in his opinion on this disease [illegible] [illegible] 2d. That in [illegible] cause is an inflammation of the mucous cellular membrane, and other surface of the cells and in some [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] may be communicated.

[illegible] those [illegible] the [illegible] blood [illegible] [illegible] and the circulation [illegible] [illegible] unassimilated [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] the parts affected [illegible] [illegible] compounds those whose actions are [illegible] dissimilar and totally distinct. [illegible] [illegible] have known very little [illegible] [illegible] and does not [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] of Gloucester has considered the permanence of the [illegible] to be seen [illegible] the immediate [illegible]. "[illegible] not contented [illegible] [illegible] because there is a probability [illegible] a chemical [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] instances [illegible] the juices [illegible] of the absorbent [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] combination, will [illegible] the same [illegible] immediately [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

Having examined in a concise manner the particular causes upon this disorder. I conclude by saying that public concurrence in Drs. Denman and Ferrier in considering it to be an inflammatory disease of a very malignant character in most instances.

Treatment; The indications are

1st. To lessen arterial action and relieve the pain.

2nd. To reduce the swelling or promote absorption.

To fulfill the first indication venesection must be had recourse to & it may be necessary to repeat the bleeding several times in this and the muscles to be extracted will depend upon the judgement of the practitioner and the constitution of the patient. Combining with venesection cathartics will be found to be very beneficial; of these the mercurial must should be administered in the first onset & the same afterwards the vinous & ...

substituted to keep the bowels gently open.
Opium may be given if necessary to relieve pain.
Harvey by these means succeeded in lessening
the force of the arterial system, but his main
reliance is the second indication, which is
to promote the absorption of the effused fluid.
Diuretics are to be resorted to in the mean
time, and the internal medications may
be used, the tart. emet. if required, or
bed every advantage may be derived from it.
It may be given either in scruple solutions
in the form of lozenges or in combi
nation with nitre in the proportion of gr. x of
each every two or three hours. Emet. may be
repeated every four or six hours.
Much attention should be paid to the diet. In
infancy it should consist of farinaceous
or mucilaginous articles, and a recumbent position
should complete the second indication.

can only usually be necessary and should not be neglected.

The application of a Sponge or napkin over the lower part of the chest is frequently attended with the most decided relief.

The warm bath or a sponging may be resorted to, the water being made to plunge and splash with vigour, or a napkin wrung from a cloth of vinegar and water placed under the bed clothes.

Local blood letting in severe cases has been warmly recommended.

The disease still continuing, after the above means have been tried, we must use a Mercurial purge so as to induce ptyalism. This seldom fails in producing relief, followed by a sweat, or a rash, or a sore throat with salivation. Tartar emetic has often produced the best effects.

The treatment for the second indication consists principally in local applications, but we must keep an eye to the general system.

In case of great debility Tonics will be proper or if there exists considerable febrile action Bs must be again resorted to. when there is irritability of the nervous system Camphor will be found a very good remedy it may be conjoined with Nitre in the proportion of grs v of the former to ʒ ss of the latter, which may be repeated if necessary, two or three times during the day. The flannel roller applied from the foot to the groin is a valuable local application. Friction with Spts Camp: Warm Oil. Camphorated liniment. cloths wrung out of hot vinegar applied to the groin are highly recommended.

The patient must not be allowed to stand or walk too much and we should advise the

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roller or bandage to be continued for a consid-
erable time after the patient considers himself
well.

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